2006-07 declined mainly because of less area coverage under oilseeds as compared to that in 2005-06.

There are fluctuations in foodgrains production in some States. However, it cannot be attributed to fertilizers. Fertilizers is only one of the inputs influencing crop production. Government has been regularly monitoring the availability of fertilizers.

Welfare scheme for vegetable producers of Sikkim

1380. SHRI O.T. LEPCHA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any scheme for the welfare of vegetable and fruit producers in Sikkim;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the total amount allocated for the purpose during the year 2007-08; and

(e) the effective measures taken or proposed to be taken by Government in this respect?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. A Centrally Sponsored Scheme of "Technology Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture in N.E. States including Sikkim, is under implementation since 2001-02 and later on extended to contiguous Himalayan States namely, Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttaranchal during the year 2003-04, in order to harness the horticulture potential of this region. The scheme is being implemented in a Mission - Mode. addressing various issues related to horticulture *i.e.*, Research, Production and Productivity, Post Harvest Management and Processing. Under the production and productivity related activities financial assistance is being provided for area expansion programme of horticulture crops, which includes programmes for welfare of fruits and vegetables producers of Sikkim. Apart from above assistance, funds are provided for creation of infrastructure such as Irrigation Sources, Integrated Pest Management, Protected Cultivation, Organic Farming, On Farm Handling and other related activity. In addition, assistance is also provided for training of farmers within and outside the State, training of trainers and for development of women entrepreneurs.

The total amount allocated during the current fiscal year 2007-08 under the above mentioned scheme to the State of Sikkim is Rs. 28.00 crores, out of which Rs. 2.42 crores and Rs.3.28 crores for fruits and vegetables development, respectively.

For effective implementation of scheme various measures are taken by the Central and State Governments as envisaged below.

(i) The Central Government has constituted a Central Steering Committees under the Chairmanship of Secretary (Agriculture), Department of Agriculture and Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture to review the progress of implementation of the scheme at regular intervals.

(ii) The State Government of Sikkim has constituted a State Level Steering Committee under the Chairmanship of Chief Secretary to regularly monitor the progress of implementation of scheme in State.

Contract farming

†1381. SHRI RUDRA NARAYAN PANY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the present status of contract farming in the country;

(b) whether the States are being forced to implement this; and

(c) whether opportunity is also being given to foreign companies for such farming?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTIAL BHURIA): (a) Contract farming is practiced in various parts of the country for crops like sugarcane, cotton, tea, coffee, etc. The main feature of contract farming is that farmers grow selected crops under a buy-back agreement with an agency engaged in trading or processing. By now, in 17 States/Union Territories, relevant provisions have been made in the concerned Agricultural Produce Marketing Regulation Acts for providing a legal framework to contract farming and in seven States/Union Territories there are no regulatory laws preventing such buy-back arrangements. However, in other States also various forms of contract farming do exist in practice. The exact extent of land covered under contract farming in the country is not known. The contract farming is reportedly beneficial to the farmers as it takes care of price risk and also helps in mitigating production risk.

(b) No, Sir. In order to make contract farming arrangements beneficial for the farmers, as well as, the sponsoring companies under a legal framework, suitable provisions were included in the Model Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) Act formulated by the Ministry of Agriculture in 2003 and circulated to State Governments for considering suitable amendments in their concerned Act by adopting those provisions. The Model Act circulated by the Ministry is suggestive in nature, and, since Agriculture is a State subject, it is for the State Governments to decide on the implementation of the contract farming arrangements in their State.

(c) At present foreign companies are not reported to be undertaking contract farming in India.

Ensuring minimum income to farmers

†1382. SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering to constitute a commission to ensure minimum income to the farmers in order to check increasing trend amongst farmers of committing suicides;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.